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JEWISH WELFARE BOARD

OCTOBER 1, 1918

The Jewish Welfare Board—Purpose and Program

INTRODUCTION.

The Jewish Welfare Board represents American Jewry united for the purpose of contributing to the upbuilding and preservation of the morale of the American fighting forces. Joining forces with the Y. M. C. A., the K. of C., the Red Cross and other organizations having the same aim and enjoying the same standing in the U. S. Army and Navy as these organizations, it seeks, first, to minister to the needs of all enlisted men, and, second, to make adequate provision for the special needs of the Jewish soldiers and sailors. Not only has this Board the official recognition of the United States Government, but it is representative of the whole body of the Jews in this country, who, through their leading organizations, constituted this Board their organ for service among the men in the United States Army and Navy.

At the moment of national crisis there was no Jewish organization fitted to divert its energies and resources from its customary aims and activities to work among the soldiers and sailors, the

Since its inception in the summer of 1917, the Jewish Welfare Board, realizing the magnitude of its task, and conscious of the profound significance of the obligations entrusted to it, has sought to mobilize the enthusiasm and patriotism of the Jews of this country, and to muster the material resources and forces of American Jewry to the effective consummation of its task.

It is too early in the history of this Board to make substantial appraisal of what it has thus far accomplished. Whatever has been achieved by this Board seems slight in comparison with what has yet to be wrought. The Jewish Welfare Board was compelled to chart its own course on an unknown sea; it had no experience of its own to draw upon; the experience of other Jewish organizations in this field was infinitesimal.

It is a matter of pride to the Board that, organized primarily to help our Government make good soldiers and sailors, it has also been successful in organizing the patriotic cooperation of civilians. The influence of this Board is going into every Jewish home. Representing the Jews of this country in welfare service among the American fighting forces, the Jewish Welfare Board reflects back and makes meaningful to its constituency the fuller implications of Americanism in action. Thousands of volunteers working under the auspices of the Jewish Welfare Board throughout the communities of the United States, and the families of the Jewish soldiers whom this Board specifically serves, are drawing inspiration from their tasks of patriotism.

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Camp Personnel.

The concrete work of providing for the comfort and religious welfare of the enlisted men is carried on by the Jewish Welfare Board through its representatives in the Camps and Naval Stations and through its Branches in the communities throughout the country.

The J. W. B. representatives in the Camps and Naval Stations work in the closest coöperation with the representatives of all the other welfare organizations. Their activities do not parallel or duplicate in any particular those of the other agencies, but they are rather coördinate with them along the general lines of social, educational and recreational functions. They fulfil a distinctive and particular duty not available to the other organizations in caring for the religious and personal needs of the Jewish men. Wherever this Board can assist the Y. M. C. A. or K. of C. to make a proposed activity successful, it has become an axiom that this assistance should be automatically forthcoming, and wherever the facilities of these agencies are needed and available for any activity which the J. W. B. desires to engage in, the coöperation of these bodies is extended with promptness and cheerfulness.

The J. W. B. has at the present time in all 213 field representatives, covering about 200 army camps and posts and naval stations. In addition to these 213 representatives, there are 50 visiting rabbis who reside in communities contiguous to the camps, and who officiate regularly at religious services and who assist generally in the supervision and development of the religious work.

The field representatives have been carefully selected from hundreds of applicants. Major... canism, are requisites for consideration by the Jewish Welfare Board for work among America's fighting men. The Board maintains a training school where the prospective field representatives are given a four weeks' intensive course in the fundamentals of Judaism, Military Life and Regulations, Current National Problems, and other subjects pertaining to the work which they are to undertake. The courses are conducted by men of experience and substantial reputation in their special fields. Commissioned officers in the Army and Navy lecture on military topics; prominent rabbis give the students an interpretation of the present crisis in the light of Judaism and indicate how this view point coincides harmoniously with true Americanism.

Before the men are sent to their respective posts they are given preliminary field training at camp, where, under the direction of experienced representatives, they are brought into actual contact with camp life and its incidental problems for the uniformed men.

The J. W. B. recognizes that it has not yet provided sufficient workers for all the camps and stations of the country, and accordingly it is now putting forth its best endeavors to secure the requisite number by conducting a national campaign for 400 additional field representatives. Whereas in the past it has graduated an average of 25 men per month from the training school, the present plan contemplates at least doubling that number for the ensuing months, until the needs are met. To accommodate this increased number, it is planned to enlarge the accommodations of the school so as not to lower the standards of thorough preparation which are so essential to effective service by the representatives in the camps.

CAMP ACTIVITIES.

The activities conducted by the Jewish Welfare Board in the camps, through its representatives, may be divided into the following classes of service:

1. Religious.
2. Personal Service.
3. Educational.
4. Social and Recreational.

In each of the larger camps from three to ten workers have been assigned, and in these camps it has been possible to develop specialists in each of these branches of service.

1. Religious Work.

The religious activity is guided by the principle of conserving each shade of religious belief represented among the Jewish men in the camp population. As a result, in the majority of the camps both orthodox and reform services are held.

The religious program for each week includes the following:

- b. Friday evening services.
- c. Sabbath services and Sunday services whenever possible.
- d. Services in the hospital.
- e. Services in the guard-house.

Special holyday services are also conducted in camp, and arrangements are usually made in coöperation with the neighboring community wherever possible for home hospitality and for such secular celebration in camp or in the community as is permitted under the traditional law governing the observances of the particular days.

In addition to the fulfilment of religious observance, the spiritual needs of the men are filled through Biblical discussions and through informal meetings held after services, at which the text of the sermon is discussed under the leadership of the minister.

PERSONAL SERVICE.

Personal service is a distinctive and specialized feature of the Jewish Welfare Board's camp program. The transition from civil to military life brings in its wake the problems of adjustment which must be adequately met by the field representatives if the morale of the soldier is not to be impaired.

The field representatives render service of the highest order in facilitating this adjustment of the men to their military life. Soldiers and sailors coming from civil pursuits in many instances find it difficult to accommodate themselves to the conditions of military life. Doubt, worry, dissatisfaction, lonesomeness, and a general lowering of the physical, mental and spiritual tone of the men are symptoms of this maladjustment. This mental distress must be eliminated if the man is to develop into a fit soldier. The personal and intimate ministrations of the field representatives which are directed towards elevating and inspiring the soldiers are instrumental in effecting that morale which constitutes one of the most important assets of a fighting force.

Many men entering the army do so with apprehension for the welfare of their families during their absence. The J. W. B. representatives endeavor to establish and maintain contact between the family of the man and the soldier himself in camp; and through their attention to matters of a personal nature they are able to relieve the soldier of any misgivings he might entertain regarding his family or his personal affairs.

There are in addition many legal matters which require the attention of the field representatives, such as the making of wills, receiving the custody of funds, negotiating transfers of property for the soldiers, completing naturalization papers, so as to entitle the man and his family to the benefits of citizenship, arranging to have the enlisted man make allotments to his family, and take insurance for himself, and matters of like nature.

are unfortunately for their time and attire confined to the hospital and guard-house. A chat at the bedside of a sick soldier, the writing of his letters, transmitting messages for him, reading a few chapters of an interesting book, are all activities which are undertaken freely. The Jewish Welfare Board's field workers keep in contact with the men who are in the guard-house and minister to their needs in every manner consistent with the military regulations.

They also interpret sympathetically to the confined soldier the laws of the camp, their purposes, and the relation of the soldiers' transgressions to the welfare and efficiency of his fellow soldiers. Thus they allay feelings of discontent which arise through a misunderstanding of the purposes of punishment and they prevent further breaches of military discipline.

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES.

a. Class Work.

Educational activities conducted by the Jewish Welfare Board representatives furnish a fruitful field of service. In addition to coöperating with other agencies, through furnishing them with teachers and lecturers, the Jewish Welfare Board is called upon to organize and direct classes in English to foreigners. It has not attempted, however, to extend its class activities independently, as this work is best done in coöperation with the Y. M. C. A. The J. W. B. has also conducted classes in Jewish History and Hebrew.

b. Culture Groups.

The field representatives organize groups for the discussion of subjects of Jewish cultural interest, at which the men may give expression to their intellectual interests. In addition, literary meetings, current event groups, and open forums for the discussion of topics of current importance are held.

c. Lectures.

In order to bring to the men messages of encouragement, hope and good cheer from the communities of the country, the J. W. B. arranged tours of the camps and naval stations for lecturers to meet the men and speak to them in groups and individually. During the months of July and August, 122 lectures were delivered to the men by 16 lay and Rabbinic leaders of the Jewish community of America. The subjects dealt with were in every instance of a serious nature, and in every case were attended by large numbers of both Jews and non-Jews. The enthusiastic reception accorded by the soldiers to these lecturers controverts the belief that is generally held that uniformed men are interested mainly in light entertainment.

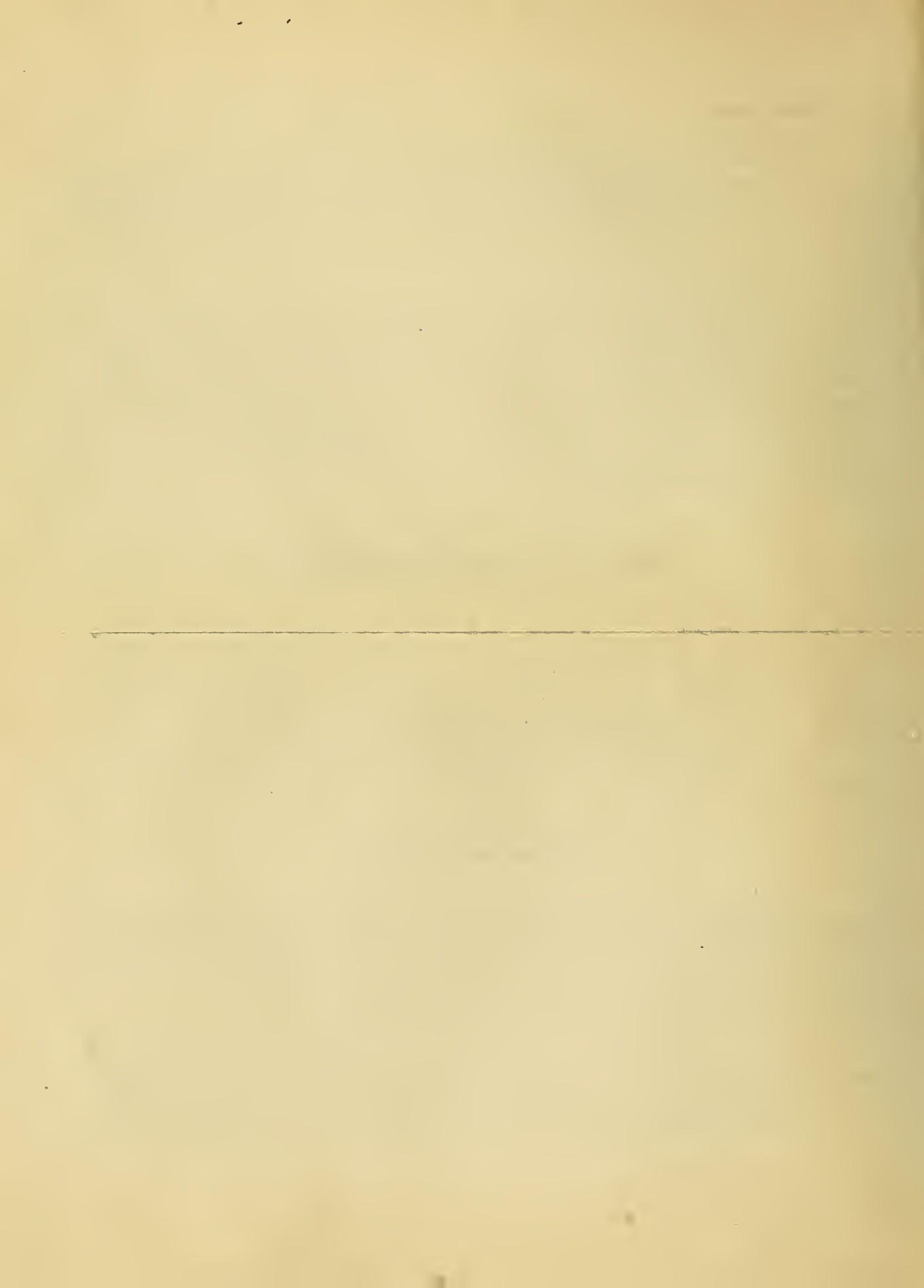
SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES.

The social and recreational activities which are conducted by field representatives of the J. W. B. for the entertainments and smokers held by the other organizations, and in turn these agencies furnish entertainers and accommodations for the affairs of the J. W. B. It also endeavors to introduce into camp such recreational features as will constitute a distinct contribution to the entire recreational and social program of the camp. The J. W. B. representative also coöperates with the J. W. B. branch in the adjacent community in planning dances, home hospitality, automobile rides, smokers and socials, concerts, lectures and such other affairs as are desired by the men and which will tend to promote their happiness and well being when they are in the city away from the camp.

SUPPLIES FOR SOLDIERS.

During the past half year the Jewish Welfare Board distributed 80,000 Prayer Books, 40,000 Bibles, over 4,000,000 letter-heads and 2,000,000 envelopes of soldiers' stationery. 4,000 Bibles, 5,000 Prayer Books, 200,000 letter-heads and 100,000 envelopes are being forwarded weekly to the camps, and these amounts are increasing from week to week. There have recently been established in the camps standard libraries of books in English, Yiddish and Hebrew.

The Board has supplied 4,647 publications through the American Library Association, and this reading material has been placed at the disposal of the men in all the camps throughout the country. In addition, there have been distributed 40,000 Yiddish translations of pamphlets on the laws of Government allotment, Compensation and Insurance, and 40,000 copies of a pamphlet in Yiddish



on Sex Hygiene. Religious articles of various kinds, including Prayer Books and Bibles in the original Hebrew, also religious accessories, such as the Tallith, Tefillin, Mezuzza, etc., are supplied to the Jewish men in uniform.

Refreshments, smokes, candy, toilet articles, knitted goods, indoor games, musical instruments, and athletic materials are furnished by the Community Branches of the Welfare Board and distributed among the uniformed men by the field representatives or through the American Red Cross.

PHYSICAL EQUIPMENT.

The Jewish Welfare Board furnishes one automobile and one typewriter for each of the camps at which its representatives are stationed, and all facilities necessary for the personal accommodation of the workers and the administration of the work itself.

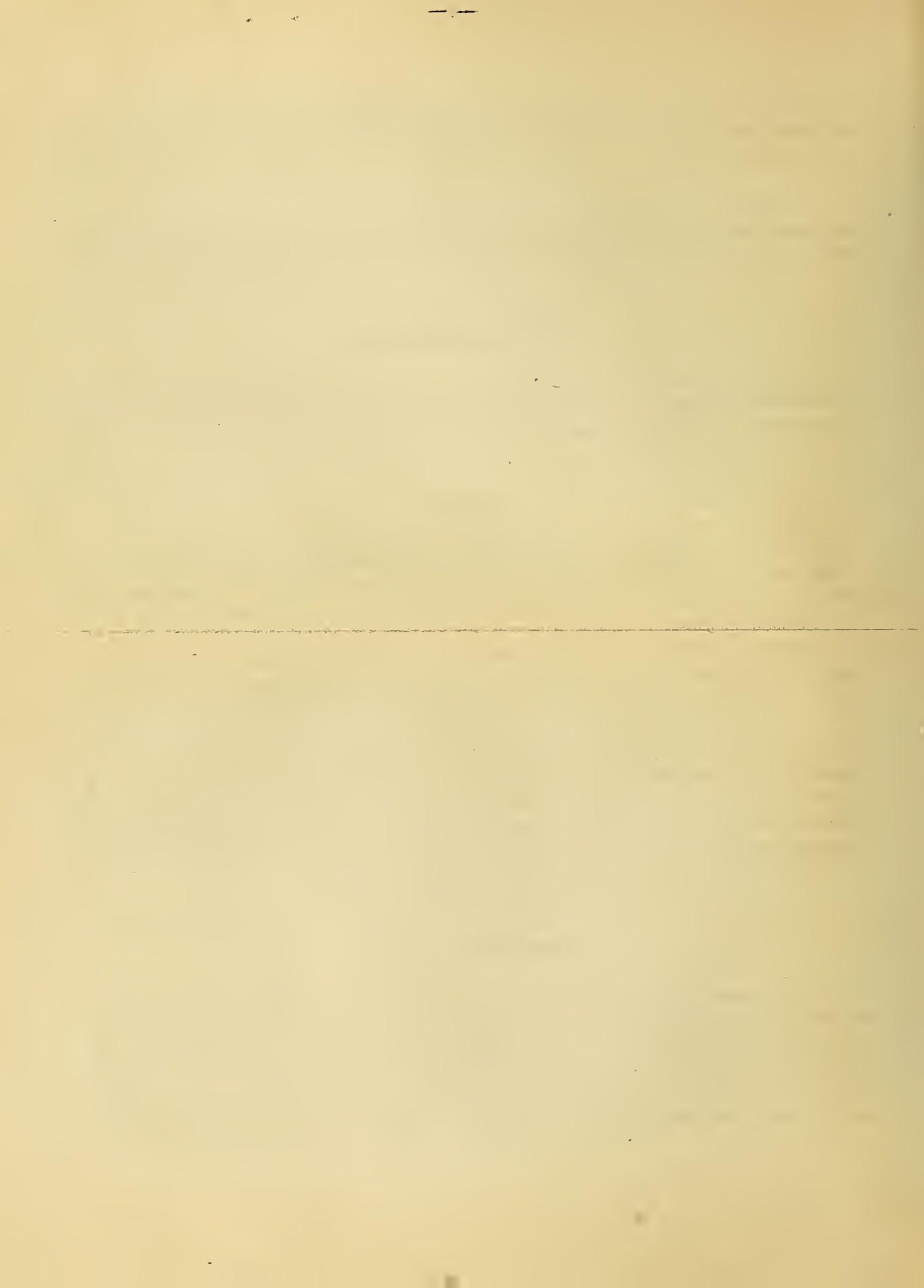
BUILDINGS.

In every camp in which a welfare organization, through its representatives, is striving to serve enlisted men, it is desirable, and usually essential, that there should be a central headquarters from which all the activities of the organization should radiate and about which the personality of the organization should center.

The Jewish Welfare Board feels its responsibility to contribute its share to the creation of the indent social spirit of the camps and to provide buildings where this good-fellowship can freely express itself. J. W. B. buildings are not separate structures for the Jewish boys in the particular camps; they are additions to the number of centers in the camps, augmenting the existing building facilities in the camp that are available to all the enlisted men. Accordingly, the J. W. B. has secured the necessary permission to erect and has authorized the erection of 50 buildings. Eighteen structures are already complete in 18 camps and 22 buildings are now under construction, and bids have been asked for the erection of the others. It is estimated, at the present time, that at least 60 additional buildings will be needed beyond the number originally authorized. As more camps are established and more men called to the existing posts, a continual increase of buildings is inevitable.

COMMUNITY WORK.

In its endeavor to minister to the need of the soldiers and sailors wherever they may be, the Jewish Welfare Board recognized from the beginning the desirability of organizing local branches in the communities throughout the country. These branches undertake to serve the men when they are in town. The soldier or sailor on leave in a city is a proper individual for the concern of the community in whose midst he is sojourning, and the program of entertainment and hospitality which the local community formulates is effective in weaning the enlisted men away from unwholesome influences



which might beset him during his stay in the town. Just as J. W. B. representatives in the camp co-operate with the Y. M. C. A. and K. of C. and other organizations, branches in the towns work in close co-operation with the War Camp Community Service, under whose direction and supervision their activities are conducted.

There are at the present time 160 branches of the Jewish Welfare Board in as many communities. About one hundred of these organizations are in towns near camps or naval stations and are active in serving the soldiers and sailors stationed adjacent to them. They conduct religious services for the men in the temples and synagogues; arrange dances, musicales, minstrel shows, smokers, lawn parties and automobile rides for the soldiers. Through the efforts of the branches the soldiers are invited to enjoy the home hospitality of private families. The branches also arrange accommodations for the relatives and friends who come from a distance to visit the men. In addition, there are 50 non-camp branches which represent as many communities organized as the patriotic expression of the Jewish people of those localities to make tangible their interest and support to the local boys who are with the colors. Branches are being continually organized in other communities at the rate of approximately twenty-five a month. These organizations arrange farewell meetings to their men on the eve of their departure for camp, and each month the National Office receives reports from about fifty communities on the successful send-off gatherings which bid their sons God-speed. These farewell meetings are attended by hundreds of people and addressed by men prominent in the civic, business, social, and religious life of the community.

The local branches furnish writing material and postage stamps to the men in uniform. J. W. B. organizations co-operate with the Red Cross in personal service work, rendering legal aid wherever necessary and visiting the families of soldiers. Some branches have organized canteen units and co-operate with the Red Cross Canteen Service.

In order to furnish the men with advice and information, many branches established bureaus of information in prominent centers in the community. The enlisted men find these bureaus helpful to them, and they avail themselves of the opportunity which is offered to secure advice as to rooming accommodations, personal matters, military regulations and all subjects relating to their welfare and that of their families.

An important activity of the Jewish Welfare Board branches is the collection of statistics regarding the Jewish men in the service. Each month the Central Office receives the names of men who have enrolled under the colors. These names are referred to the Bureau of Statistics of the American Jewish Committee, which is compiling an historical record of the part the Jews in this country are taking in the present crisis. The Publicity Committees of the branches are also active, and over fifty newspaper accounts of various functions and accomplishments undertaken by the branches are forwarded to the Central Office each month.

In order to furnish the men with proper club facilities, the Jewish Welfare Board branches have established community centers which are open to all men in uniform. Reading rooms, gymnasiums,

and swimming pools are among the facilities of these centers, which are popular among the men. There are at the present time 50 community centers conducted under the auspices of the Jewish Welfare Board. During the month of July, 11 new soldiers' club rooms were opened in as many centers. The average weekly attendance at each of these centers is estimated to be 500 men.

The Jewish Welfare Board allots monthly subventions to the local branches to enable them to conduct their welfare work. At the present time sixty-one communities receive monthly subventions.

Communities are being constantly organized to carry out further the welfare program of the National Board. If these branches are to do work as effectively and as thoroughly as is desirable, adequate financial assistance must be available to them. The existing branches are continually enlarging the sphere of their work by embarking upon new activities which tend to promote the further happiness and comfort of the men, and are seeking to reach an increasingly larger number of soldiers. Additional community centers must be established in towns as new camps are developed or old ones enlarged. This inevitable expansion of community work will make heavy drafts upon the funds of the Board, and as the worthiness of this phase of its activities is so manifest, retrenchment or parsimony in financial policy will not be tolerated by those who have charged this Board with the task of serving the men and serving them well. It is estimated that for next year subventions for community activities will aggregate \$750,000.

OVERSEAS WORK.

WORK OVERSEAS. A commission of four representatives and an executive secretary has been in France to organize and develop a program of Jewish welfare work for the men fighting abroad. This Commission has made definite arrangements with the military authorities and the other welfare agencies for the organization of a comprehensive scheme of welfare activities which, similarly to those in the United States, will be generally in behalf of all the men with particular regard to the needs of the Jewish soldiers.

Supplies of Prayer Books, Bibles and copies of the book "Jewish Thoughts," by Chief Rabbi Hertz of England have been distributed by this Board among the soldiers overseas.

In connection with the work among the American Expeditionary Forces eight Jewish chaplains now with the army were recommended to the War Department by this Board.

In addition the Board has recently recommended 22 additional chaplains to the War Department, in accordance with the authorization and recommendation of General Pershing.

If the Board is to execute faithfully the program of welfare work which has been outlined by the Commission, there will be needed immediately many workers and a substantial and elastic fund for overseas activities. The Board is now conducting a campaign for 100 workers for immediate service abroad, and this number will have to be augmented at the rate of about 25 men per month until there is an overseas force of 300, the minimum necessary to meet adequately the expansion of the American Army in France.

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CONCLUSION.

Although the Jewish Welfare Board began its work in the summer of 1917, it was unable to render appreciable service until January, 1918, when a fund of a million dollars was made available for its work.

At that time there was a field force of 43 and a central office staff of 10 workers. At the present time there are 213 field representatives, 50 visiting rabbis, 5 field supervisors, a central office organization of 75 workers assigned to the following divisions, which have been created to develop expertness in the planning and management of our work: Camp Service, Community Service, Overseas Service, Information Service, Personal Welfare Service, Training School, Personnel Publicity, Revenue, Auditing and Accounting, Material and Construction.

But withal the Jewish Welfare Board has built only a framework, which, however, will lend itself to the obvious expansion necessary to meet the needs of the increasing army of men that are joining the fighting forces of America. With the extension of the draft ages, bringing into the Army and Navy added millions of men, the resources and material forces of the Board will be taxed to the maximum. The home field force must be increased from 213 to between 500 and 600; there must be at least 300 overseas workers; instead of 42 buildings, there will be required at least 100; there must be a proportionate increase in the central office organization, in the field supervising force, in the quantity and diversity of supplies for the soldiers, sailors and marines.

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